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ABSTRACT

Recently, a line of conceptual and empirical research has begun to investigate the notion of schools as "communities." Following a survey of works on this idea of community in research and theory, this paper presents findings of a single-site case study conducted during 1995-96 in an urban elementary school in Los Angeles. Data-collection methods included participant observation; interviews with parents, students, teachers, and administrators; and document analysis. In 1993, Jackson Elementary Schools faculty and staff voted to participate in a new restructuring initiative called Los Angeles Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now (LEARN). The study found that the community at Jackson resembled Selznick's (1992) concept of "primary groups." The process of cultivating community and effectiveness at Jackson involved careful hiring of teachers, positive instructional leadership along with appropriate delegation of authority, timely response to felt needs, ongoing reflective dialogue about student learning and pedagogy, and an academic press that continually sought to improve. These priorities, in the context of a culture that fostered trust, caring, and ownership and a structure that enabled such values to thrive, helped Jackson personnel to build a school that was both effective and a truly caring community. One figure is included. (Contains 70 references.) (LMI)

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Community in Research, Theory and Practice:

Implications for Schools

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World Impact, Inc./UCLA

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

In many urban schools, student violence and dropout rates are high, teacher morale is low and turnover high, alienation between and among various groups is commonplace, shrinking resources and worn-out facilities have become the norm. Urban schools which serve predominantly low-income students of color frequently rank at or nea the bottom of their districts and states in various measures of student performance (Haycock & Navarro, 1988; Quality Education for Minorities Project, 1990; Valencia, 1991). There is no shortage of theories, empirical studies, or blaming in dealing with urban education. Yet in spite of the hundreds of studies and millions of dollars spent, millions of children are trapped in a system which not only fails to prepare them academically for the future they will face, but often crushes their fragile spirits in the process.

Recently, a line of conceptual and empirical research has begun to investigate the notion of schools as "communities," arguing that we adopted the wrong metaphor when we began to view schools as organizations *(Gesellschaft)* rather than communities *(Gemeinschaft)* (Sergiovanni, 1994b). Research from a variety of disciplinary perspectives presents the argument that the best schools are places where a strong sense of community or "family" exists. In particular, successful urban schools are often described in terms of "community," and "family," not just in terms of their academic accomplishments (Sergiovanni, 1994a; Willis, 1995).

However, because "community" is a particularly popular and even overused word in educational circles today, before we can look at schools which are communities or exhibit a sense of community, we must look at how "community" itself is defined. Theologian Frank Kirkpatrick (1986) discusses the problem of defining community because of its overuse.

> Because of its extraordinarily broad application, "community" covers a number of groups, to some of which each of us probably belongs. We live in a community, perhaps work in another community, belong to a professional community, worship in still another community,

> and support a whole host of still more communities by virtue of our taxes, citizenship, and voluntary membership. Because of this enormous flexibility in the word "community," we often become either confused by its use or, more likely, so inured to hearing it used in a multitude of ways that it eventually collapses into a meaningless term evoked more for rhetorical or emotional reasons than for illumination or explanation. (p. 2)

In this paper, I examine findings from educational research related to the concept of community in schools. I then present a theoretical description of community, drawn from works in sociology, psychology, philosophy and social theory. Finally, I briefly describe how community fleshed itself out in one urban elementary school in Los Angeles.

Community in Educational Research

Educators have rarely considered the full implications of what "community" means in the context of schools. Much of the work in education has been from an empirical perspective, without really establishing the theoretical assumptions underlying various "measurements" of community in schools. This section briefly reviews the theoretical educational literature on community and related topics, and then discusses a number of empirical studies which relate to the concept.

Educational concepts of community generally center around three areas: shared norms and values (what we believe),[1] shared activities (what we do together), and particular types of relationships where the ethic of caring is central (how we treat one another) (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988b). Furthermore, these three areas occur on two simultaneous levels: among the adults in the school (teacher to teacher, teacher to administrator, etc.), and between the adults and students in the school, particularly teacher to student (see Figure 1).

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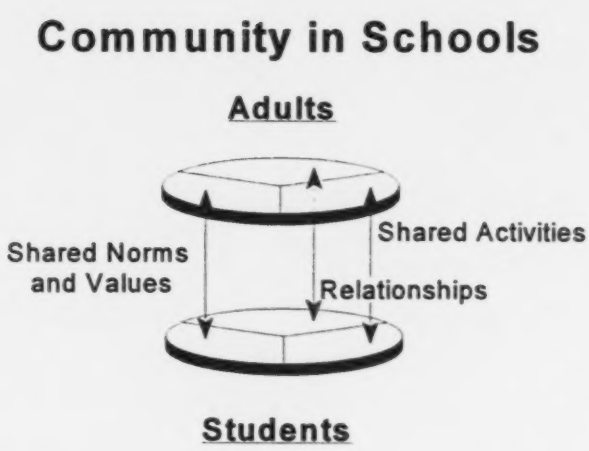
[1]The specific nature of these shared norms and values is often not articulated.

Figure 1



Educators writing from sociological, administrative, ethical, psychological, and organizational perspectives consistently link the three areas of values, shared activities, and caring relationships to community (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988b; Heath & McLaughlin, 1991; Mitchell, 1990; Noddings, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1994a).

A variety of empirical studies have surfaced these same themes in looking at school climate, effectiveness, organization, and ethos. Lee, Dedrick and Smith (1991) used the High School and Beyond (HS&B) data set and its accompanying Administrator and Teacher Survey to examine teacher efficacy and satisfaction. They actually operationalized the "sense of community" to include agreement with these statements from the teacher surveys:

- You can count on most staff members to help out anywhere, anytime--even though it may not be part of their official assignment.
- Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.

- I feel accepted and respected as a colleague by most staff members.
- There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members.

Thus, according to their analysis, community among the teaching staff included shared values, a feeling of belonging and acceptance, and cooperative activities (Lee et al., 1991).

A number of studies involving interviews with teachers and administrators identified workplace conditions, school culture, and school climate factors which affected teachers, administrators and students. Little's (1982) interviews with over 100 teachers revealed that in successful schools more than in unsuccessful ones, teachers valued and participated in norms of collegiality and continuous improvement (experimentation); and they pursued a greater range of professional interactions with fellow teachers and administrators, including talk about instruction, structured observation, and shared planning and preparation. Again, we see the shared norms and values, shared activities, and caring/collegial relationships described by Bryk and Driscoll (1988b). Johnson (1990) also interviewed over 100 teachers to discover that

> schools bound by symbol and culture are likely to promote a shared sense of responsibility among staff and to encourage teachers to find in the school organization ways to meet both their own needs and the needs of the school community. (p. 219)

In addition, Ashton and Webb's (1986) in-depth interviews with eight teachers found that teachers' efficacy was supported by shared decision making, team teaching, and the opportunity for teachers and students to be together for more than one year, which in turn related to student achievement.

A number of case studies have also reinforced the importance of shared values, shared activities and caring and collegial relationships in schools. For example, Hill, Foster and Gendler (1990) studied 13 urban high schools and discovered that those which were successful had a clear sense of the purpose of the school and were able to take action to achieve that purpose and build

relationships within the school. Wehlage and his colleagues (1989) studied 14 alternative secondary schools which were effective in keeping high-risk youth in school and found that:

> In our interviews with students, we repeatedly encountered expressions reflecting the importance of membership in the school. Asked about the strengths of their alternative school, students persistently described ways in which these were friendlier and more caring places than their previous schools had been. They talked about peers accepting them and teachers caring about them,...and the value of being accepted as an individual. These expressions were linked with students' own willingness, in turn, to reciprocate with participation in school activities and conformity to school norms [emphasis added]. It is this reciprocity between students and teachers that distinguishes most of the schools we studied. And it is this reciprocity that provides the context for membership that appears lacking in the previous school experiences of at-risk students. (p. 114)

In their study of five urban high schools which made significant improvements, Louis and Miles (1990) discovered the importance of a shared school vision and shared ownership in those schools. In addition, Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) ascertained, in their study of ten urban high schools, that teacher and student commitment to each other and to the school was positively affected by having a strong sense of purpose or relevance, feeling connected to others around them, norms that promoted collaborative relationships, mutual respect, adequate support from the administration, high expectations, and a sense of control and influence over decisions and policies. A recent study by Louis, Marks, and Kruse (1996) of 24 successfully restructuring public schools confirmed previous studies cited above in finding that "respect is at the core of a positive school culture" (p. 786).

In summary, the educational research cited above has tended to characterize schools with a strong sense of community by their shared values about the purpose of the school, participation in

shared activities, and relationships characterized by caring and collegiality. This is often fleshed out through a schoolwide mission or vision, collaborative teaching, and the presence of rituals, ceremonies and traditions. Yet, because this research generally lacks a theoretical base and rests on unexamined assumptions regarding which values must or should be shared, which activities must or should be shared, and which relationships must or should be collegial and caring, it provides little understanding of how community develops in schools, or how the negative characteristics of communities, what Noddings has termed "the dark side of community" (1994), might be avoided or addressed. While there have been many cries in educational literature of late to build community in schools, it is not clear that educators know what that means in actuality or have agreement about what that might look like. This is why a theoretical framework surrounding the concept of community is so essential.

Community in Theory

Concepts of "Community" in Sociology and Political Theory

German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1887/1957) has had a major influence in shaping current definitions of community. He used the word *Gemeinschaft* to describe community in his seminal work, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* [Community and Society], originally published in 1887. Tönnies identifies three forms of *Gemeinschaft*: 1) **Gemeinschaft of kinship**, which describes family and extended-family relationships; 2) **Gemeinschaft of place**, which derives from sharing a common area; and 3) **Gemeinschaft of mind**, which refers to "the bonding together of people that results from their mutual binding to a common goal, shared set of values, and shared conception of being" (Sergiovanni, 1994a, p. 6, commenting on Tönnies, 1887/1957). Community of mind, the mutual commitment to a common goal, is that aspect of *Gemeinschaft* which advocates say is necessary in building a sense of community in schools (Sergiovanni, 1994a), in contrast to

Gesellschaft (translated "society"), which is a more contractual form of relationship. While these are ideal types, growing numbers of educators are calling on schools to become less contractual and bureaucratic, and more communal. In short, they believe a movement toward *Gemeinschaft* and away from *Gesellschaft* is desirable (Furman, 1994; Sergiovanni, 1994b).

However, social theorist Philip Selznick (1992) writes about the limits of *Gemeinschaft* for modern society, arguing that it refers not to a broad definition of community, but one kind of community, "one that fully realizes values of historicity and mutuality, [but] does so...at considerable cost to personal mobility and autonomy" (p. 365). Its weakness is a glorification of solidarity, with a resulting push toward uniformity and homogeneity, rather than a recognition that a community needs diversity in order for its members to be truly interdependent. The village-like quality of *Gemeinschaft* which Tönnies envisioned would be unworkable and undesirable in modern society. Instead, Selznick (1992) maintains that "strong communities are *institution-centered*" (p. 370), embracing some elements of *Gemeinschaft*, but having a much broader ability to "resist homogeneity and sustain differentiation" (p. 370). Some of the elements of *Gemeinschaft* which sociologists argue are necessary and beneficial to modern society are described below.

Arguing from an anthropological and biological orientation, Andrew Oldenquist (1991) describes community as "collective mentality" (p. 96), "an expression of our innate sociality" (p. 97). Oldenquist maintains that because we are innately social beings, we are incompatible with a life of "radical individualism" (p. 97), and thus we "find emotional satisfaction in social identities, group loyalties, and cooperative endeavors for a common good" (p. 97), in order to fulfill our biological nature. This inherent need for community manifests itself partly through ritual and ceremony, which are universally found in every culture. Oldenquist argues that their abandonment, either in an individual, family or group, signals alienation and anomie. Referring to schools, he states,

> Banishing ritual and ceremony from schools...on the utilitarian grounds that they are useless and more suitable for dictators and New Guinea tribes banishes an essential element of human social life. When people speak casually and informally they speak for themselves; when they speak in a ritual or ceremony the community and its values speak through them. The world over, ceremony is the way one knows that a collectivity and not merely an individual is speaking. (p. 99)

Organization theorists Bolman and Deal (1984) concur that ritual and ceremony serve to "provide order and meaning that help to bind an organization together" (p. 163). Such symbolic events help members of the organization deal with uncertainty, anxiety, fear and ambiguity, while simultaneously serving to socialize new members. When such rituals are lost, particularly when a community ceases to retell its stories, much of the cohesion which holds a community together is lost. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) stress that communities are, above all, "communities of memory."

> [They] have a history--in an important sense they are constituted by their past--and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a "community of memory," one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative, and in so doing, it offers examples of the men and women who have embodied and exemplified the meaning of the community. (p. 153)

In addition to these symbolic and historical aspects, community is also distinguished by requiring of its members certain attitudes, concerns and interests, while formal organizations require only certain actions and care little what individual attitudes might be. Members of a community must see themselves as belonging to the community, and must generally feel and carry out their communal obligations, in order for a community to actually exist (Ladd, 1959).

In summary, these writings from sociology and political theory contrast community with the more contractual arrangements of society by identifying certain characteristics which typify a community. These include a mutual binding to a common goal and shared set of values, the building and fulfillment of social identity, cooperative endeavors for the common good, ritual and ceremony, in which narratives describing the community's history are told and retold, and a particular attitude and commitment on the part of the members, who view themselves as part of the community and thus feel an obligation to carry out certain responsibilities for the good of the whole.

According to these writings, in a school we would expect to see clearly articulated goals and values about schooling which various stakeholders agree upon, cooperative projects between adults and students, a sense of pride in the school and a feeling of belonging to it, the telling and retelling of important stories about the school's history, and the celebration of significant events. Nevertheless, this leaves us with an incomplete picture of what community might look like in a diverse setting like a neighborhood public school. Little attention is given in these writings to the specific nature of which values should and must be shared, the limits of *Gemeinschaft*-community in modern society (as Selznick points out), and how questions of individuality and difference might be resolved in an institution functioning in a community-like manner.

Concepts of "Community" in Psychology

Psychologists have also examined and defined the concept of community, but their emphasis is somewhat different from that of sociologists. Psychologists look at community in at least two different ways. Community psychologists discuss the "sense of community" as the defining characteristic of community (Chavis & Newbrough, 1986), while other psychologists look at the universal human need to belong (Maslow, 1970) as a rationale for community.

While Seymour Sarason is perhaps best known for his work on school culture and the

problems of educational reform (Sarason, 1982; 1990), he devoted a book in the early 1970s to a description and justification of the fledgling field of community psychology, which he claimed was necessary because of the absence of a psychological sense of community in our society (Sarason, 1974). Sarason defined this "sense of community" as

> The sense that one [is] part of a readily available, mutually supportive network of relationships upon which one [can] depend and as a result of which one [does] not experience sustained feelings of loneliness that impel one to actions or to adopting a style of living masking anxiety and setting the stage for later and more destructive anguish. (p. 1)

Sarason expands this definition later in the book to include the sense of belonging and meaningful connection to a larger collectivity, in spite of conflicts, which must be resolved in order not to destroy the sense of community which exists. Psychologist Nicholas Hobbs and his colleagues (1984) offer a similar view of this sense of community when they say that,

> In communities, individuals experience a sense of membership, influence members of the group and are themselves in turn influenced by others, have personal needs fulfilled, and share a psychologically and personally satisfying connection with other people....[Community] also involves reciprocal obligations,...communities offer support for their members. (p. 41)

In 1986, two issues of the Journal of Community Psychology were devoted to defining and describing the psychological sense of community. Chavis and Newbrough (1986) defined a community as "any set of social relations that are bound together by a sense of community" (p. 335), and defined sense of community as "a concept that is primarily psychological: It refers to the personal knowing that one has about belonging to a collectivity" (Newbrough & Chavis, 1986, p. 3). In the same issue, McMillan and Chavis (1986) defined "sense of community" as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a

shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 9). They went on to operationalize "sense of community" to include (1) membership, (2) mutual influence, (3) a shared emotional connection, and (4) the integration and fulfillment of needs. Thus, a community exists when there is a sense of community--that is, when people feel they belong, care for and influence one another, and meet one another's needs.

Similarly, some psychologists look at community as a critical part of meeting the human need to belong (Maslow, 1970). Hobbs, Dokecki, Hoover-Dempsey, Moroney, Shayne and Weeks (1984) found that community promotes human development, and McMillan and Chavis (1986) argue that a sense of community must include a feeling of belonging. This need to belong is especially critical for children, who need a sense of "continuity and constancy in their environment" (Mitchell, 1990, p. 38), and whose sense of self-worth develops only when they are "grounded in community" (Kunc, 1992, p. 28). Community thus becomes the vehicle through which a "collective sense of belonging" is built (Mitchell, 1990, p. 39), partly because community "involves the coming together of people around shared values and the pursuit of common cause" (Hobbs et al., 1984, p. 41).

Thus, these pyschologists agree with the sociologists cited above that shared values are a central component of community, which, they argue, "provide the integrative force for cohesive communities....The extent to which individual values are shared among community members will determine the ability of a community to organize and prioritize its needs-fulfillment activities" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 13). Finally, psychologists include another fundamental element of community, saying that "the essence of community is caring" (Hobbs et al., 1984, p. 43). Caring is thus the litmus test in distinguishing communities from mere associations.

To summarize, these writings from psychology identify a community as a group which shares a "sense of community," including a feeling of individual and collective membership or belonging,

having mutual influence over one another and the group, sharing an emotional connection with other group members, caring for one another, sharing values, and having individuals' needs met. Caring school communities would thus promote a sense of belonging among both adults and children, school staff and community members, by making sure that members felt safe on the campus, seeking to address individual needs (both academic and emotional/personal), even at times, bending rules and policies to benefit individuals, and actively caring and taking responsibility for all members, including parents. Yet once again, writings from psychology leave us with only a partial image of a community-like school. The nature of which values are shared by whom is not addressed in this literature, nor do we have a sense of any kind of purpose for an institution like a school beyond helping people feel good about being there. Furthermore, as with the sociological literature, issues of conflict, disagreement, and diversity are not addressed.

Concepts of "Community" in Philosophy and Social Theory

As noted above, the failure to deal with issues of diversity and individuality are two weaknesses of sociological and psychological examinations of community. Another major problem with definitions of community from sociology and psychology is that they have little moral or philosophical basis for distinguishing communities from other kinds of associations. It appears that as long as a group has common goals, values, rituals and ceremonies, and the members of the group care for each other and feel a sense of belonging to each other and the group, then community exists. In fact, John Dewey (1954) defined community as:

> "...conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all...who take part in it, where the realization of the good is such as to effect an energetic desire and effort to sustain it in being just because it is a good shared by all. (p. 149)

But, is the mere fact of conjoint activity which all in the group desire to sustain sufficient for a group

to be labeled a community? What then do we say about groups such as teenage gangs, the Ku Klux Klan or neo-Nazis? Are these groups true communities? Must communities form by including only certain people and excluding others? And what about the identity of the individual within the group? How are the opinions and beliefs of the minority protected from domination by the majority? These are questions which philosophers have worked to address in their exploration of the topic of community. In particular, the writings of Frank Kirkpatrick (1986), Mary Rousseau (1991), and Philip Selznick (1992) provide answers to these questions.

Philosophical writings provide a means for differentiating types of communities and protecting schools from the negative aspects of community which can develop over time and against which liberalism has repeatedly cautioned. Kirkpatrick (1986) uses the work of Scottish philosopher John Macmurray to argue that communities formed primarily around self-interest, which he terms *atomistic/contractarian* and Selznick (1992) calls *segmental participation* (e.g., the social contract), are not true communities. However, *organic/functional* models of community, which emphasize the common good and the function of each individual in serving the common good, are dangerous because they can easily subsume the individual within the group.

A third model of community, called by Kirkpatrick (1986) the *mutual/personal model* and by Selznick (1992) *communitarian liberalism*, recognizes both the uniqueness and inherent worth of each individual and the interdependence and mutuality of persons. In this model of community, "individual persons [are] mutually related in and through intentional love for each other for the sake of the other" (Kirkpatrick, 1986, p. 207). This model of community "assumes that full, individual personhood is realized only within community and that the pursuit of one requires the pursuit of the other" (Beck & Kratzer, 1994, p. 14). It is intentional, universal and inclusive (Palmer, 1977), grounded in our common humanity (Kirkpatrick, 1986; Selznick, 1992), since

> If you intend to exclude some from your community you can only do so by constricting your capacity to love and when that happens, your full personhood is constricted accordingly....Therefore, if the fullness of personal being is to be achieved, its condition must be the intention for a universal community of persons in which no one is intentionally excluded. (Kirkpatrick, 1986, p. 196)

Philosopher Mary Rousseau (1991) also examines the differences between authentic communities and those which are counterfeit, arguing that certain groups may look like communities, but are not. In order to clarify the term "community," she returns to its Latin roots, and defines it as a paradox: "Many turned into one without ceasing to be many" (Rousseau, 1991, p. 3). She argues that altruism is "the norm for discerning between genuine and apparent community. However, altruism does not mean a masochistic denial of self. In fact, Rousseau (1991) argues, "Altruism and self-love are not opposites. Rather, they coincide" (p. 19). Altruism is

> to wish a good to someone. Thus, to love oneself is to wish what is good for oneself. But what is good for oneself is the extension of one's being into the life of a beloved, forming community with him through the common possession of a single good. (p. 19)

Selznick (1992) calls such a view "enlightened self-interest" (p. 532). The opposite of altruism, Rousseau (1991) argues, is not self-love, but the social contract, since it assumes that the solitary individual is the basic unit of persons, rather than recognizing that every individual is a member of a natural community at birth.

By using altruistic love as the identifying characteristic of true community, Rousseau (1991) argues that a community of evil intent cannot be an authentic community, nor can an evil individual be a member of a community.

> For if altruistic love is the tie, the only tie, that can bind us together existentially, then where

> love is lacking, so is community. Groupings of people of evil intent are thus mere associations, appearing to be communities but not really so. And evil-doers might exist in spatio-temporal closeness to a given community. But they are, at best, only apparent members of it. (p. xii)

Apart from community, motivated by altruistic love, we end up using people for our own ends. Selfishness is implicit in contracts. And Rousseau argues that this selfishness, taken to its logical conclusion, has devastating results:

> It is but a small step from a hedonistic or utilitarian interest in the well-being of others to a cold indifference toward them. And it is but another step, smaller still, from indifference to competition, and from competition to outright murderous hostility. (p. 60)

Selznick (1992) uses the terms *bounded* and *inclusive altruism* to contrast authentic and false community. Inclusive altruism, or universalism, might push us to rescue a child even if we did not know her. A bounded altruism, which Selznick equates with particularism, would limit our commitment to individuals with whom we have some special connection. While inclusive altruism is more difficult to sustain, it is that which grows out of deliberate choice, along with "the experience of cooperation and reciprocity" (p. 194). While group life manifests both forms of altruism, an authentic mutual/personal community would be largely guided by inclusive altruism. In fact, Selznick (1992) argues that "to sustain community as a framework for the whole of life and for the flourishing of multiple groups, a transition must be made from...bounded to inclusive altruism" (p. 521).

Furthermore, an authentic community is a community of inquiry, what Selznick (1992) calls "the covenant of reason" (p. 525), where truth and respect form the foundation of relationship. In this, it is not unlike the model of critical inquiry described by Sirotnik and Oakes (1990). Rousseau (1991) describes relationships in such a community:

> All sincere persons are united to truth as their common goal and exemplar, and thus are united with each other. They form a community of inquiry which, while unified, totally respects the individuality and diversity of all its members....Hence, each inquirer respects completely the individuality and the integrity of every other inquirer in his unique, sincere search for truth. (p. 93-94)

Thus the uniqueness of the individual is preserved, the commitment to truth is validated, and diversity is seen as a positive, not a negative. Yet community is more than just inquiry and discussion. According to Macmurray (1957) and Rousseau (1991), it must also involve morally right actions.

This is philosophy's answer to those in sociology and psychology who argue that a community merely requires shared values and a sense of belonging. An authentic community has a much higher moral calling (Selznick, 1992), though shared values are one important component of community (Rousseau, 1991). Nevertheless, community does not mean that everyone must agree on everything. But when individuals are committed to certain basic values, which the community itself derives, to seeking to do what is best for others, and to a spirit of inquiry, then community is possible (Selznick, 1992). As Bernstein (1987) describes in his essay on pluralism, this was an issue with which John Dewey wrestled earlier in this century.

> In moral, social, and political life, pluralism means that we must always respect and do justice to differences and seek to understand what presents itself as other and alien without violently imposing our own blind prejudices and ideologies....There is tendency toward centrifugal decentering and fragmentation, which can result in a solipsistic atomism. And there is the opposite danger of eliminating or obscuring all real differences into a false totality....Dewey was aware of the danger of the type of degenerate pluralism that would block community and communication. He was perspicacious in seeing this not primarily as a theoretical problem

> but as a practical problem--a problem that demands working toward a type of society in which we can at once respect and even celebrate differences and plurality but always strive to understand and seek a common ground with what is other and different. (p. 521)

It is the mutual/personal model of community, grounded in inclusive altruism, which is most able to realize what Bernstein (1987) describes--unity in the midst of diversity (Selznick, 1992). Authentic community is intentional, inclusive, heterogeneous, self-critical, mutually-binding, without evil intent, grounded in inclusive altruism, trust, and mutual respect. Just as responsible parents desire the very best for their own children, in an authentic community members desire the very best for all other members. The distinction between "my children" and "those children," for example, is broken down.

Under this model, a school would not be good enough unless it were good enough for the teachers' and administrators' own children. Diversity, whether ethnic, religious, linguistic, or of opinion, would be celebrated and used to enhance the entire school community. The intrinsic worth of each person along with the need to work together for the common good would both be upheld. Empowerment, along with a sense of ownership and responsibility for the school and its members, would exist among all stakeholders, including students. Leadership and participatory opportunities would be widely available.

Community in Practice

The Benefits of Communal Schools

Because schools' primary responsibility is to educate students, some would argue that feelings of belonging, shared values, and caring are beside the point--that what really matters is whether or not students are learning. There is ample evidence that this is in fact what happens in schools which exhibit the defining characteristics described above. Several studies link communal school

organization or some of its indicators with student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bryk & Driscoll, 1988b; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Crawford & Aagaard, 1991; Fuller & Izu, 1986; Hopfenberg, Levin, Meister & Rogers, 1990; Lee & Smith, 1995; Louis & Miles, 1990; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Wehlage et al., 1989). In addition, positive student attitudes, morale, behavior, and engagement in learning, improved attendance and college-bound rates, and decreased dropout and retention rates have been found to positively correlate with the presence of community or its indicators (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988a; Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Hopfenberg et al., 1990; Louis & Miles, 1990; Meier, 1992; Wehlage et al., 1989).

Nevertheless, we cannot prove causality in these cases--in other words, we cannot know with certainty that the presence of a sense of community or communal organization is what leads to higher achievement, lower dropout rates, and the like. One could argue that a school's sense of community is a result of improving achievement, lowering dropout rates, etc. While this is unlikely, given the presence of studies which look at schools over time and document the development of a shared mission and collegial relationships prior to the improvement of test scores and other outcomes (e.g., Comer, 1989; Hopfenberg, 1991; Hopfenberg et al., 1990), it has been difficult to determine just what factors have caused such changes to take place.

Studies have also linked the presence of community in schools with positive benefits for teachers. These benefits include higher teacher morale (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988a; Bryk et al., 1993; Johnson, 1990; Louis & Miles, 1990; McLaughlin, 1993; Meier, 1992), a greater commitment to the school and manifestation of collegiality (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988a; Bryk et al., 1993; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988), a greater sense of efficacy and empowerment (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Comer & Haynes, 1991), and the ability of teachers to change and improve their practice (McLaughlin, 1993). Teachers who feel empowered and committed to their school and colleagues

are more likely to stay at the school for a longer period of time (Dworkin, 1987) and invest more time and energy into their teaching and relationships, thus providing even greater benefits to students. Again, however, causal relationships cannot be established. It is therefore not clear how or why these benefits occur.

One explanation of how student achievement is positively affected by a school's sense of community is that the positive benefits accrue to students because of the changes which take place among teachers. As teachers become more collaborative and collegial in their relationships with one another, this may result in the sharing and implementation of more effective teaching strategies and thus greater student learning (Schaps, 1996). However, there is little evidence at this time which actually documents this relationship. Those doing research in this area readily admit that they do not fully understand how a sense of community translates into student achievement, but they are adamant that it does happen.

Researchers studying issues of school and classroom climate have attempted to establish a link between climate and student achievement. In other words, how do differences or changes in an environment affect the learning of an individual student? There is evidence that classroom environment or climate can positively or negatively affect student motivation, which in turn has been linked to achievement (Ames, 1987). Furthermore, a causal link has been established, at least at the high school level, between the psychological environment of the school and student motivation and achievement. As Maehr and Fyans (1989) report in a study of tenth graders, utilizing multivariate and path analysis, "School culture and peer achievement press are indeed the critical variables in determining motivation and school achievement at this stage of life" (p. 233).

What then are the critical elements of classroom and school culture which seem to contribute positively to student motivation and achievement? Not surprisingly, they include many of the

elements cited in the theoretical section in connection with descriptions of community and sense of community. Praise and encouragement, mutual respect, a feeling of belonging, clear goals, high expectations for self and each other, emphasis on caring, positive interpersonal relationships, minimizing of competition and comparison, a sense of safety (both physical and emotional), tolerance for mistakes, giving people choices, ownership and responsibility, and valuing the worth of individual persons are some of the characteristics of school and classroom culture which have been associated with positive student motivation and achievement (Ames, 1987; Maehr & Fyans, 1989; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

The danger again, however, is in creating a list of characteristics which equal community, just as we have a list of characteristics of effective schools (Edmonds, 1979). For it may not be the characteristics themselves, but the relationships between them, which are actually important (Wheatley, 1992). Management consultant Margaret Wheatley (1992), in her exploration of ways in which new discoveries in science may have implications for organizations, argues, "In new science, the underlying currents are a movement toward holism, toward understanding the system as a system and giving primary value to the relationships [emphasis added] that exist among seemingly discrete parts " (p. 9). She goes on to describe how Newtonian models of physics implied that if we could look at and understand each part individually, we could then understand the whole. New discoveries in quantum physics negate such assumptions. The whole must be examined as a whole, and the parts must be examined in relationship to one another, not merely as discrete variables. Research on community in schools has generally not been guided by such thinking.

A Study of One School

To examine how one urban public elementary school manifested characteristics of a caring community, grasp the complexities of relationships between and among various members of the

school community, and gain a variety of perspectives on the school's ethos, mission and goals, I conducted a single-site case study (Yin, 1989) over a period of one school year (1995-96). The school studied was characterized by a positive climate and sense of community, effective site-based management, teacher collaboration and collegiality, significant parent involvement and enthusiasm, and student-centered curricular and instructional approaches. Case study methodology enabled me to examine what it meant to insiders and onlookers for a school to exhibit community, the process of cultivating a caring community, and the larger context in which this process took place, including the historical background of the school and the restructuring in which it was engaged.

The selected school was chosen based on recommendations from personnel working with urban schools undergoing reform. Achievement criteria were used partly as the basis for selecting the school, because of my interest in the relationship between effectiveness and community. While standardized test scores at the school were not stellar prior to my study,[2] they were higher than other local public schools serving similar populations. Furthermore, the school had gained a reputation for instructional and curricular innovation and for success in implementing site-based management principles, and it had been cited by an independent evaluator as one of three schools undergoing restructuring in Los Angeles which were doing particularly well (McKinsey & Co., 1994).

Almost 250 hours of participant observation of classrooms, schoolwide activities, faculty meetings, governance council meetings, and parent meetings, along with semi-structured (audiotaped) interviews with students, parents, teachers and administrators regarding their perceptions of the school climate, culture, and ethos, were the primary means of data collection. Teacher interviewees were chosen according to a stratified random sample by grade level and track. In addition, school and

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[2]The school has seen dramatic improvement in standardized test scores and other measures of student performance in the past two years and was recently honored by the district for its achievements.

classroom documents were collected to provide historical and social context. These data coupled with field notes were analyzed using a modification of the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Site Description

Jackson Elementary School is located 16 miles from downtown Los Angeles and is part of the second-largest school district in the nation, the Los Angeles Unified School District. Adjacent to industrial and commercial areas, the school serves a neighborhood population residing in apartment buildings and tiny single-family homes. Due to the industrial nature of the area, the majority of the residents are blue collar workers or unskilled laborers. Many families are immigrants from Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Families frequently move into and out of the area as jobs and apartment rentals change.

In spite of fairly high levels of transiency, the racial and ethnic composition of the school has changed only slightly in the past decade. The percentage of Hispanic students has increased steadily and stood at 92.6 percent in the fall of 1995. In contrast, the percentage of white students decreased from 11 percent to 3 percent during the same time period. The African-American and Filipino student populations remained fairly constant at about 2 percent each. From 1991 to 1996, enrollment at Jackson increased from 797 to 1170 students, 90 percent of whom were eligible for Title 1 services and 76 percent of whom were classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). Over 95 percent of the students qualified for free or reduced-fee lunches and breakfasts under the Federal Lunch Program, up from 82 percent ten years ago. In 1993, 26.1 percent of the students' families received AFDC, a higher percentage than most other schools in their region of the district.

In 1993, Jackson faculty and staff voted to become part of a new restructuring initiative in Los Angeles, called LEARN, which stands for Los Angeles Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now.

Spearheaded by educators, corporate and community leaders, LEARN's restructuring plan called for increased autonomy at the school level, particularly over budget, increased parent involvement in school site governance, integrated social services, and better professional development for teachers. Thirty-four schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District volunteered to be part of LEARN during its first year (1993-94), including Jackson. To become a part of LEARN, 75 percent of each of four "stakeholder" groups (teachers, administrators, parents, and classified staff members) at a school must agree to the decision. At the time of the study, over 150 Los Angeles schools were part of LEARN.

During the 1995-96 school year, Jackson was staffed by a principal, assistant principal, bilingual/Title 1 coordinator, full-time counselor, two special education teachers, and 40 regular education teachers (four of whom shared contracts), along with a variety of support personnel who provided services one or two days per week. Each of the 39 classes (pre-kindergarten through sixth grade) had a part-time aide, and additional aides provided support on the playground, in the library and computer center, and in the workroom. Twenty-two classes (kindergarten through sixth grade) were bilingual (Spanish and English), while fourteen were English-only. The pre-kindergarten class had two sessions each day--one in English and one in Spanish. Special education instruction was provided in the student's primary language.

Due to overcrowding, the school operated on a year-round schedule, as it had for over 15 years. The 1170 students and 42 teachers were divided into three tracks. Each track attended school for two months and then was off for one month. The tracks were staggered so that only two tracks were at school at any given time. Teachers roved every month between the 26 classrooms. Because this schedule resulted in fewer instructional days for each track, the length of the school day was increased to make up the difference. Due to the year-round schedule, the only extended time when no

classes were in session was the week between Christmas and New Year's Day. The school year began in early July and ended in late June.

A Brief Look at Jackson's School Culture

The picture of community we are offered at Jackson bears a striking resemblance to what Selznick (1992) calls primary groups, those groups in a society "that do the main work of socialization and from which, throughout life, we derive nurture and support. Families are the chief example, but other groups have similar functions" (p. 190). Selznick goes on to identify the most important features of these primary groups, these family-like or community-like relations which nurture us throughout our lives.

(1) Response is to whole persons rather than to segments. People at Jackson were viewed as whole people, rather than just identified by their role (teacher, student, etc.). It was recognized that faculty, staff, students and parents had needs outside of the academic function of the school, and that the school had a legitimate role in seeking to either meet those needs or be sensitive to them. For example, Jackson saw itself as supporting both student learning and student development. As stated in Jackson's vision statement, developed by the entire school community, "Jackson's vision is for a community connected school where all children are valued and learn to become educated thinkers and caring members of society." Learning (and caring), rather than narrowly-defined achievement, was the goal because the emphasis was on developing the whole child.

(2) Each participant is perceived as having intrinsic worth. Jackson stakeholders recognized each person (from a pre-kindergarten child to the principal) as uniquely valuable just because they were a part of the school community. Each person was therefore treated with dignity and respect. Because of this, the well-being of individuals within the school was linked together with the well-being of the whole school. There was no dichotomy between self-interest and altruism (Rousseau,

1991). Through "enlightened self-interest" (Selznick, 1992, p. 532), each member recognized the link between the other members and herself, and effectiveness was recognized not as an average test score, but as what met the needs of each individual at the school.

(3) Communication is open and founded on trust. Trust and respect were evident at Jackson in the collaboration and collegiality among teachers, the interactions between administrators, teachers and parents, and the ways in which diversity and divergent viewpoints were accepted and encouraged among faculty and in classrooms. Jackson's climate of mutual trust and respect meant that individuals believed the best about each other, gave each other the benefit of the doubt, and trusted others with those things and people most important to them (including the fact that teachers trusted their colleagues with their own children). Because it was safe to express divergent viewpoints, communication was open and frank, without being rude or sarcastic.

(4) Obligation is mutual, diffuse, and open-ended. Another overriding characteristic of Jackson's school climate was the sense that formal roles and structures were less critical and influential than were relationships and informal interactions. In particular, teachers and administrators interacted with each other and with students and parents beyond the stated requirements of their roles in ways which centered around an ethic of caring. The fluidity of boundaries at Jackson, the personal/professional crossover, was evidence of a willingness to go beyond the contract or the job description to care for others at the school. Commitment to relationship was fundamental.

(5) There is a sense of belonging together and sharing a common identity. The way individuals and groups at Jackson--teachers, administrators, parents, classified staff and students--exhibited and articulated a sense of ownership for the school and a sense of responsibility to see that people's needs were met was another overarching theme of Jackson's culture. The principal's efforts

to delegate and encourage responsibility, the teachers' willingness to take initiative, the efforts of various groups to care for "our" school, and the commitment of all stakeholders to care for "our" children were the key ways this sense of responsibility and ownership were exhibited. Jackson stakeholders had a sense of working together to do what was best for the students. The school belonged to everyone, and all had a responsibility to make it work. In addition, newcomers were brought into the community and, in intentional and deliberate ways, were helped to feel they were an important part of the Jackson family.

(6) Personal development, security, and satisfaction are paramount. Jackson, as a caring community, viewed the affective dimensions of school life as legitimate and central to what happened there. By broadening the definition of effectiveness to include the affective domain (e.g., sense of belonging, trust, respect, fun, meeting needs), Jackson examined not only test scores and attendance rates, but also the relationships, ideology and motivations of people in the school. Staff, students, and parents at Jackson were encouraged to keep learning and growing. Individual needs were recognized at Jackson, not as running counter to group needs, but as interconnected with them, and adjustments were made to accommodate individual needs whenever possible (Kratzer, 1996a; 1996b).

According to Selznick (1992), Jackson School, because it was strongly characterized by these six elements, in all likelihood plays an important role in socializing children into the world of education, work and community, in buffering members from external pressures and demands, and in validating individuals' unique needs and intrinsic worth. This is perhaps why several teachers at Jackson commented that their best friends were other staff at the school, even though they had known no one when they came. "When...activities are sustained by ties of affection and mutual responsibility, the integrity of persons is more easily preserved" (Selznick, 1992, p. 193).

Conclusion

It would be easy to focus on structures such as site-based management, shared decision-making or parent involvement to explain Jackson's success. But what gave these structures meaning and power, and what made them work at Jackson, because they do not work everywhere (Murphy & Beck, 1995), was the school's sense of itself as a caring community. The structures were merely means to an end--that of valuing persons in community.

The process of cultivating community and effectiveness at Jackson involved careful hiring of teachers, positive instructional leadership along with appropriate delegation of authority, timely response to felt needs, ongoing reflective dialogue about student learning and pedagogy, and an academic press that continually sought to improve. These priorities, in the context of a culture which fostered trust, caring and ownership and a structure which enabled such values to thrive, helped Jackson personnel to build a school which was both effective and a truly caring community. While this is not a prescription for other schools, these findings are consistent with studies of other schools which have undergone significant positive change (e.g., Louis et al., 1996; Louis & Miles, 1990). The study of Jackson Elementary School supports the conclusion of Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996), who state that,

> The structural elements of "restructuring" have received excessive emphasis in many reform proposals, while the need to improve the culture, climate, and interpersonal relationships in schools has received too little attention. While it may be easier for policymakers to imagine how to restructure schools rather than change their culture, the latter also appears to be a key to successful reform. (p. 786)

By critically examining the concept of community and its implications for schools, we are able to more accurately describe and explain what we do and do not want our schools to be and why. Jackson School offers a picture of community which is very consistent with the philosophical writings of Kirkpatrick, Rousseau and Selznick, and it provides one model from which other schools can learn.

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